

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 SSM-03 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01
ACDA-07 IO-13 /100 W
-----021617Z 026043 /50

R 011408Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3492
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR
SUBJECT: GOE REACTION TO BREZNEV SPEECH ON MIDDLE EAST

REF: CAIRO 5586 (NOTAL)

1. ECONCOUNS AND EMBOFF HELD TWO-HOUR MEETING WITH SOVIET
DCM AKOPOV MARCH 31. AMONG SUBJECTS DISCUSSED WAS EGYPTIAN
REACTION TO BREZNEV SPEECH ON MIDDLE EAST. ACCORDING
AKOPOV, INITIAL GOE REACTION UNFAVORABLE BECAUSE IT WAS BASED ON
WIRE SERVICE EXCERPTS RATHER THAN FULL TEXT OF SPEECH.
AFTER FULL TEXT DELIVERED, REACTION BEGAN TO SWING AROUND
UNTIL SPEECH NOW PUBLICLY CONSIDERED POSITIVE STATEMENT.

2. HOWEVER, ACCORDING AKPOV, EGYPTIANS HAVE PRIVATELY
ASKED FOR CLARIFICATIONS PARTS OF SPEECH INCLUDING
BREZNEV STATEMENTS ON ISRAELI PASSAGE OF SUEZ CANAL,
NECESSITY "SECURE BORDERS" FOR ISRAEL, BORDERS AND NON-MENTION
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PLO. AKOPOV INSISTED THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN
SOVIET POSITION ON ANY OF ISSUES. REASON BREZNEV DID NOT
SPECIFICALLY MENTION PLO WAS BECAUSE SOVIET POSITION
ALREADY ON RECORD AND IT WAS NOT FELT NECESSARY TO BRING
IT UP AGAIN. AKOPOV CLAIMED BREZNEV DID NOT MENTION
"DEFENSIBLE BORDERS" AT ANY POINT IN HIS SPEECH AND
HE WAS REFERRING TO POLITICAL REALITY THAT ISRAEL MUST

HAVE RECOGNIZED BORDERS FOR ANY SETTLEMENT TO BE LASTING.
QUESTION OF SUEZ CANAL WAS MINOR POINT SINCE OFFICIAL
GOE POSITION IS THAT ISRAEL WOULD HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO
FREE PASSAGE OF CANAL AFTER STATE OF WAR ENDED UNDER
1888 CONSTANTINOPLE CONVENTION. AKOPOV REPEATED THAT THERE
HAD NOT BEEN ANY SHIFT IN SOVIET POLICY AND THAT BREZNEV
STATEMENT COULD NOT BE REGARDED AS PRO-ISRAEL.

3. COMMENT. OTHER SOVIET DIPS. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH
EMBOFFS HAVE TAKEN SAME POSITION THAT BREZNEV SPEECH DOES
NOT REFLECT CHANGE IN USSR POLICY. SOVIETS ALSO DENY THAT
TIMING OF SPEECH HAD ANY SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE. HOWEVER,
EGYPTIANS TEND TO BELIEVE TIMING OF SPEECH IMPORTANT WHEN
VIEWED IN RELATION TO RECENT PNC MEETING AND PRESIDENT
CARTER'S MIDDLE EAST STATEMENTS. THEREFORE, DESPITE
CATEGORICAL SOVIET DENIALS, IT APPEARS EGYPTIANS STILL
PERCEIVE SPEECH TO BE SOME SORT OF GESTURE TOWARDS ISRAEL.
MATTHEWS

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